



Charlotte Mason's House of Education,
Scale How, Ambleside, UK, 2009

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comprehensive outline will continue to experience a favourable reception, and will serve for an introduction to more extensive historical readings. The pupil, indeed, who is well acquainted with it will be prepared to read the works of Robertson, Hume, and others with greater pleasure and profit, and, having a general outline impressed upon his memory, will be able to refer each work to its proper place in the system." One would imagine that this expectation would be doomed to disappointment, and that the unhappy student would most probably register a vow against ever, by his own free will and consent, unclosing the pages of any historical work.

In such an epitome, Alexander the Great and all his achievements are necessarily disposed of in three or four lines, whereas the *Parents' Review School* prescribes Plutarch's *Life of Alexander*, and allows two terms for its study!

Again, instead of the heaven-sent gift of imagination being scouted as a foe to learning, it is welcomed as a useful ally. One has only to read *Tanglewood Tales* with an intelligent child to see the contrast between one method of gaining a knowledge of mythological characters, and that of my childhood's horror—Mangnall's questions. Fresh from Hawthorne's graphic description of Mercury, a statue in a museum with the familiar accompaniments is recognised as an old friend. To see "Minerva" inscribed upon the ribbon of a companion's sailor hat means raising a host of interesting associations.

Once more, the books we use encourage and develop powers of observation. A child of six without the faintest leaning towards abstract learning can rejoice in being sent to the garden to fetch in, identify, and describe six leaves. Perhaps (after a pause and mental grope for the more accurate language which was not forthcoming) to individualize a poppy leaf as "very in and outy" sounds absurdly inadequate and certainly lacking in scientific precision. And yet the poppy had received very special attention, and may not the mental grope have stimulated, albeit unconsciously, a desire for fuller powers of expression? Would the committing to memory a list of technical terms from a botanical primer have had a like result? The claim put forth by the *Parents'*

Review School is a confident assertion that the *aids* it affords have made its *aims* attainable. "The children respond and take to their lessons with keen pleasure."

"All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy," as applied to education, surely embodies a popular fallacy. The *Parents' Review School*, in its workings, clearly demonstrates that instead of work and play being diametrically opposed, they may supplement and stimulate each other, and that work can yield such healthy interest that its results may be seen in an added zest to play. And may we not believe that a lesson which has been translated into play is a lesson assimilated?

When the story of the *Dauntless Three* has been rehearsed upon a narrow railway bridge; when the story of the "Caudine Forks" has been chosen by a small convalescent as a drama capable of illustration with a few toy soldiers and carefully arranged bed clothes: when one is shown a tableau representing in miniature the discovery of the relics of Sir John Franklin's fated expedition, may we not cheerfully endorse the claim made by the *Parents' Review School*? When we find a boy of eight listening with appreciative interest to Tennyson's *Defence of Lucknow*, or Mrs. Browning's *Cry of the Children*, may we not hope that the seeds have been sown of that healthy interest in literature and knowledge which will bring forth abundant fruit in after days?

MISS R. A. PENNETHORNE (Ex-Student of the House of Education) then read her paper on

THE USE OF BOOKS IN TEACHING HISTORY.

Those of us who were of "school age" fifteen years ago will probably remember that our history lessons were almost inevitably lectures, during which we scribbled notes for dear life. Now, this is a process which a love of history may survive, but it is hardly likely to create it where it is wanting. Some people would ask, "Why should we love history?" Of course a certain amount of it is necessary as instruction, and this no doubt such a system gives, but they would hardly regard it as a taste to be cultivated. Now, if you regard learning not as an end in itself, but simply as a means for development of character, there is hardly any subject so important as history.

Is it not the aggregate of human experience, and hence a guide for our own inexperience? Is it not the effective cause of the present, and is not the future to be foreseen only inasmuch as it is the product of the past? Therefore, history as a guide to the life of the world must be *living*, the story of the lives of men.

In hardly any subject then is the danger of the oral lesson so great as in history, and no subject so much calls for the self-effacement of the teacher. We do *not* want to study persons through the medium of a third personality. The child does not want to have the teacher's personal bias influencing his judgment of such great lives and characters, as, for instance, Queen Elizabeth or John Wesley! The historical lecture boiled down from many books, and with much real learning perhaps, is still served up with teacher's sauce, and there is no real contact between the pupil and the great ones of the past. Indeed, this method of learning history is one way of acquiring a fine stock of prejudices so injurious to the candour of a child's mind. To be personal, I know that two men whom I could not conscientiously wish children to admire, Charles II. and Maximilian Robespierre, would be dealt with very tenderly at my hands, while I should be incapable of giving them fair and impartial ideas of Mr. Gladstone or the first great Duke of Marlborough.

The moral lessons of history do not need to be applied or "rubbed in" by the teacher—we do not want to use Nelson as a text for telling children they should love their country. Rather they want to get such an idea of what constitutes a hero, that they may be ready not only to feel it for themselves, but to act on it for themselves, if ever life gives them opportunity.

But, it might be urged, how do books obviate these difficulties, and what books are suitable for putting into the hands of children? We of the P.N.E.U. are ready to put our faith in books, and are rejoicing in the literature from which we may choose. History being the story not merely of kings, battles, and Parliaments, but of the lives of the men who have "counted," be they pope or peasant, we begin by accustoming the children to be interested in lives before these golden beads are threaded on to the great chain of time which forms the historical epoch.

The youngest children of the *Parents' Review* School, or rather the class above the youngest, children who average seven to nine, are freed utterly from the yoke of "William the Conqueror, 1066, married Matilda of Flanders," etc. Neither are they laboriously dragged through a text-book of history made easy, like "Little Arthur's," nor are they set down to history reduced to dry bones, like the ancient Pinnock's Handbooks. They have two books, which are to be read to them—the *Heroes of Asgard* (in which they greatly delight), and Dean Church's *Stories from the Iliad*. Now the child who has had those two books read to him knows without any talk or lessons about it—first, what made the great English race at once visionary, active, and upright; and knows also what was the tradition at the back of the minds of the Romans and Greeks of historical times. So when he goes up to the next class and begins to hear about them, he *understands* them—they are characters familiar to him, and their allusions and ideas are not foreign to his mind; and he learns all this with unconscious ease.

So the next class, Ib., children from eight to ten, have three more books—first, that they may not narrow down history to the concerns of their own country, one, the perfect history book, Plutarch—the man who writes lives of men as the histories of times, and deals impartial justice out to all. Outsiders might think he was too "difficult" for children; of course, there are passages one omits—so there are in the Bible, however—but children love him, and their eyes sparkle when the moment comes to go away with him into "the high and far-off times."

Then, for English history they have two books—*Sketches from British History*, by Yorke Powell—delightful cameos, clean-cut and complete in themselves, telling just the sort of things a child wants to know—how King John gnawed the rushes on the floor, or how St. Anselm was done to death by beef bones—the human touches which bridge over the centuries. Lastly, that they may not think the age of heroes is over, they have Mrs. Frewen's *Tales from Westminster Abbey*. The lucky child who has that book will keep it all its life, take it with him, perhaps, on his first visit to the nation's greatest treasure-house, and while reading of Dr. Livingstone, General Gordon, or Lord Shaftesbury, will see these days, so often miscalled prosaic, illumined with the heroic light.

Class II., for children from about ten to twelve, has also three books. Plutarch, of course, for one, and then an English history book which is written from the point of view of "the citizen of no mean country." Mr. Arnold Forster's book, as Mrs. Hickson has already told us with so great an appreciation, is not a text-book—nothing is slurred over and falsified or made easy, but it is written with charm, patriotism and compelling common sense, and illustrated so that half-an-hour with its portraits introduces the captivated child to many friends old and new. In Class II. the work for the current term is the *Great Revolution: James II. to Queen Anne*. In this class children begin to follow the closely-related history of France from Mrs. Creighton's *History of France*, and the interest they take in French history is curious. This class is also reading Plutarch's *Romulus*.

In Class III., children from twelve to fourteen and fifteen, Mr. Arnold Forster's English History is still in use. Here, as also in Class II., an historical novel dealing with the period for the term is always given, a story which older pupils could read by themselves and for themselves. Of course, the great mine to draw from is Scott. One has heard very clever and cultivated people sneer at Scott, and dub the "Wizard of the North" "prosy." His literary style was not hurried, and that is just why he is so invaluable for carrying the children back into the past. Alone among our writers of historical novels, he lived before modern conditions had revolutionized life. It was quite natural to him to treat of time and space as barriers almost as great as they had been a century or two before. His own thoughts and traditions belonged to the days when violence was quite common in daily life, and security a blessing to be prayed for, not an established right. No modern author, however clever, could quite convey to us the limitations in which life then moved.

I regret that I cannot give you the exact course for Class III. this term; it deals, of course, with *one period*—for to live in and understand a *period* is to have acquired that precious gift, the historical method and outlook, which scampering through the history book from cover to cover does *not* give. This term the Class III. children are reading of the nineteenth century, so they have Henry Kingsley's

Valentin to make them familiar with the great European wars of our generation—the Franco-Prussian in this instance.

Class IV. is chiefly composed of girls from about fifteen to seventeen, who should have acquired already the scholarly habit of turning naturally to books. They have this term Modern History as exemplified by two of the grandest lives of the nineteenth century—Mrs. Fawcett's *Life of Queen Victoria*, and Sir William Butler's *Life of General Gordon*. This habit of reading biographies is so priceless that I must stop to say a few words in its praise, for I do not think that any boy or girl brought up to enjoy these books at fifteen will read nothing but fluffy novels when all their time and tastes are under their own direction. Reading biographies we keep company with great minds and lives, and we see the trend of events happening within our memory, and so keep abreast with our own times instead of lagging behind when the whole tide of human effort has been swept in some new direction by the forces of great characters. Girls accustomed to history from books, for instance, would be keen and eager to read the new *Life of Mr. Gladstone*, and having done so would understand and realize much around them which they had before ignored.

Instead of French History, girls in Class IV. study Lord's *Modern Europe*, and whichever volume of the "Story of the Nations Series" best fits in with the general scheme of their historical work. This term it is *Modern Italy*, whose birth belongs to the past century and whose future still causes such acute anxiety. The novel which accompanies this scheme is *Romola*, treating of all the splendid turbulence of mediæval Italy.

So much for the children's scheme of reading, and if you ask what need there is of a teacher at all when the children so often read to themselves, there is often the need of an oral lesson to introduce the subject, or to sum up the effects of a period. Besides it is to her that the children will narrate the substance of each lesson. And she will often be able to use her blackboard, and see that her children use, to illustrate difficult passages, to make headings of the matter studied, or to make sketch maps by the way. It is as a recipient of the results in the form of narration for the lower Classes and short but vivid reports for the upper, and as a sort of consultant physician, to explain difficulties and combine accounts.

It takes a very well-read woman to be a safe guide through the allusions of Plutarch, or the airy suggestions of a Macaulay. The teacher hears, explains, guides, sympathizes—and stands aside. In fact she reads with the pupils as with intelligent companions, making it her business, however, to secure that a residuum of *ordered* knowledge remains after the interest of the reading has subsided. The child reads, marks, learns, and inwardly digests—and accepting the past as a precious gift goes forward with a good courage into the future.

MISS C. N. HEATH (Ex-Student of the House of Education) then read her paper on

THE USES OF BOOKS IN GEOGRAPHY.

In former days, geography, at any rate as taught in schools, was a mere matter of memory; so many names and facts to be learnt by rote from text-books and repeated the next day, with occasionally a few maps laboriously copied from an atlas. In this way the pupil, at the end of a term, had gained no more real idea of places outside his personal knowledge than he possessed before.

This can hardly be considered an educative or intelligent method of using a book, nor in all likelihood were the books themselves educative or intelligent. From the beginning it must be realized that all outline or text-books are to be avoided as in no way tending to realize our aims of intelligence and education, which we should always bear in mind.

What then, we may ask, should be the aim and end of a geography book? It should be to give children living ideas connected with the world around them, enabling them to understand by the aid of books, the scenery, climate, industries, and manners and customs of lands other than their own. To accomplish this we see at once that the outline book will not suffice, but that a "Reader," more or less in the style of a book of travels, is required; such a Reader should be as the padding to the framework, serving the double purpose of welding the structure together and rendering the dry facts easier of remembrance. It is of Readers thus written, which are used in the practising school, that I would say something to-night. The Readers are five in number, the first one

dealing with the elementary facts of geography, such as the shape of the earth, its movements, the use of maps and how to make them. Before the book can be made use of, however, the children must have thoroughly mastered, by means of oral lessons and practical demonstrations on the part of the teacher, the methods adopted in making a map, and what is meant by drawing a map to scale. This they easily understand if they are taught to make plans for themselves, beginning, say, with a simple one of their own schoolroom, then one of the house, and so on till they can even draw a map of the local district. In like manner the teacher must demonstrate the movements of the earth, the causes of day and night, or the seasons, till difficulties are overcome and the pupils ready to study the Reader for themselves.

It must be borne in mind that the oral lessons are not to take the place of the Reader or to remove all need for mental effort on the part of the child, but should be used to prepare the mind so that it is ready to digest the mental food in its new form; then to continue our former metaphor, having firmly fixed the framework it is possible to put on the padding.

Readers II. to V. are devoted to accounts of our own and foreign countries; and here we notice that before the reading is begun the map questions at the end of a chapter must be dealt with first. This may seem a backward proceeding, but the principle that applies to the oral lessons holds good here, the map questions in this case representing the framework. These questions are, of course, put by the teacher (who must if necessary invent them herself), and should be answered by the pupils from the map only. As an example of the style of questions, I will read you a few on the maps of Holland and Belgium:—

(1) Describe carefully the situation of Holland and Belgium,—between what parallels they lie; in what part of Europe; surrounded by what lands and what seas?

(2) Holland is much broken into by the sea,—name the openings. Name the largest of the chain of islands which hems in the Zuider Zee.

(3) North Holland forms a peninsula,—what is its northern point? What opening nearly cuts it off from the mainland? Name two towns upon this opening. How is the Y connected with the North Sea?